



08/09



NORTH CENTRAL
LANDCARE
ANNUAL REPORT



NORTH CENTRAL
Catchment Management Authority
Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People



This North Central Landcare Annual Report Card is a snapshot of the achievements and highlights of another busy year in the North Central Region for our eternally passionate, dedicated, industrious and energetic Landcare groups, networks and 'friends' groups. In 2008-09, More than 180 groups worked towards helping our environment, our wildlife, our farmers and our communities. Members and non-member volunteers of all ages, from all walks of life and from towns small and large, enjoyed opportunities to make new friends, learn new skills and have fun. Despite many challenges, Landcare continued to make a positive difference to our landscapes, our agricultural sustainability, the health of our natural environment and the health of our communities in North Central Victoria.

THE NORTH CENTRAL CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

The North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) works to protect and improve rivers and the natural environment in North Central Victoria, an area that covers 13 per cent of the state. This involves: undertaking projects to restore river health; funding onground works to protect and improve the environment; overseeing the use of environmental water to improve the region's rivers and wetlands; using the best available science in all projects; and investing in biodiversity improvement along rivers and other sites with high environmental value, monitoring the effectiveness of its activities to achieve the best results for investment.

THE NORTH CENTRAL CMA REGION

The region covers an area of approximately 30,000km² with 200,000 people residing within the catchment. It is bordered by the majestic Murray River in the north, the Wombat State Forest in the south and Mt Camel Range in the east. The region comprises four main waterways; the Campaspe, Loddon, Avoca and Avon- Richardson rivers. These ribbons of life, along with their many valued tributaries, link the vast array of vibrant communities and the diverse landscapes we enjoy in a region rich in Indigenous and European cultural heritage.

SUPPORTING LANDCARE GROUPS

In 2008-09 the North Central CMA continued to support Landcare groups in the region by delivering a variety of events, workshops and training opportunities.

Highlights include:

- The annual Regional Landcare Forum held at Little Lake Boort on 24 March 2009 to recognise the contribution of the volunteer Landcare community over the past year and to encourage participants to imagine the future. A feature of the day was the launch of the publication *Celebrating our Most Significant Change – Stories of Landcare in the North Central Catchment*, detailing cases of 21 individuals, families, groups and organisations that have made a difference. The day, hosted by the North Central CMA and supported by Powercor Australia, the Loddon Shire and the Boort Development Committee, involved inspirational guest speakers, Landcare group displays, local produce stalls and participation by local Indigenous communities; and
- The launch of the booklet *Rolling up our sleeves: Landcare Stories from around Victoria* showcasing some of the individuals, who, through their commitment and dedication, have worked to protect and restore parts of the Victorian landscape. Gabby Hogg from the Lake Charm Landcare Group was featured representing the North Central Region.

CURTIS REPORT

In late 2009, the Victorian regional Landcare coordinator network distributed surveys to all community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) groups and networks in Victoria. The survey aimed to gather data on group activity and group health. With previous surveys at regular intervals since 1991, this is the only statewide longitudinal study of CBNRM groups in Australia. These surveys have involved a long-term collaboration between Charles Sturt University's Professor Allan Curtis and the Department of Sustainability and Environment. Data obtained has underpinned efforts to assess and enhance program effectiveness at state and national levels. Although it must be noted that there were only 47 respondents of a possible 160 in the North Central Region, it is interesting to highlight some of the results:

- The average membership of groups and networks was 48, an increase of nine since 2004;
- Recruitment results suggested that 66 per cent of respondents reported new members;
- Seventy-five per cent of respondents indicated that member participation in group and network activities remained the same or higher than that in 2004;
- Just under half of the groups and networks said they had engaged non-member volunteers to directly help with Landcare work in the past year; and
- Twenty-six per cent of respondents in our region established demonstration/trial sites and 31 out of 47 groups/networks indicated current monitoring projects with stream water quality, remnant vegetation health, revegetation survival, threatened species and new/emerging weeds were the most common.

SECOND GENERATION LANDCARE GRANTS

The annual Second Generation Landcare Grants (SGLG) enable community groups and networks, and their volunteers, to undertake effective onground works to increase ecosystem resilience, contribute to sustainable landscapes and build community capacity. In 2008-09:

- \$281,819.70 was distributed to carry out 36 Major Integrated Projects across the region;
- \$24,851 funded the Promotion and Education initiatives of 18 groups; and
- \$7,000 supported 14 groups in the form of Group Maintenance grants.

Landcare groups across the region utilised SGLG funding to achieve a wide variety of activities including:

Onground works

Revegetation by tubestock; revegetation by direct seeding; fencing of revegetation; vegetation corridors; remnant enhancement; fencing of remnant vegetation; weed control (Gorse, Blackberry, Spiny rush, Boxthorn, Hawthorn, Thistle, Horehound, Paterson's curse, St John's Wort, Prickly Pear, Cape Broom, Cape Tulip, Willow, Poplar, Wheel Cactus, Scotch Broom, Chilean Needle Grass); pest animal control (rabbits); rabbit harbour removal; rabbit warren ripping; grazing control; roadside conservation; path construction; seed collection; plant propagation; establishing an educational indigenous garden and nature trail; barbeque areas; erosion control through stock exclusion fencing; waterhole construction; rehabilitation of tunnel erosion; water quality monitoring; and soil testing.

Planning and coordination

Project management; monitoring and evaluation; action planning; roadside management plans; funding applications; meetings; media releases; keeping financial records; engaging contractors; and liaising with agencies/landholders/other conservation groups.

Engagement, promotion and training

Planting field days; field days showcasing project achievements; rabbit awareness community field day; Australian grasses identification field day; rabbit and fox control training; seed collection workshops; basketry workshop using indigenous native plants; native vegetation identification workshops; direct seeding workshops; climate change/carbon market workshop; propagation of native plants from seeds and cuttings workshops; cultural heritage workshop; phyto remediation workshop; bus tours; launches; Junior Landcare; walk and talks; bird surveys; information stalls at agricultural shows and community market days; forums; barbeques; Waterwatch; seedling giveaways; demonstration sites; group newsletters; community newsletters; newspaper articles; Back Creek Conservation Area brochure; biolink educational poster; Gardening With Indigenous Plants In The Talbot District brochure; Sheepwash Creek brochure; and a photographic competition calendar.

Volunteer hours contributed by Landcare Groups

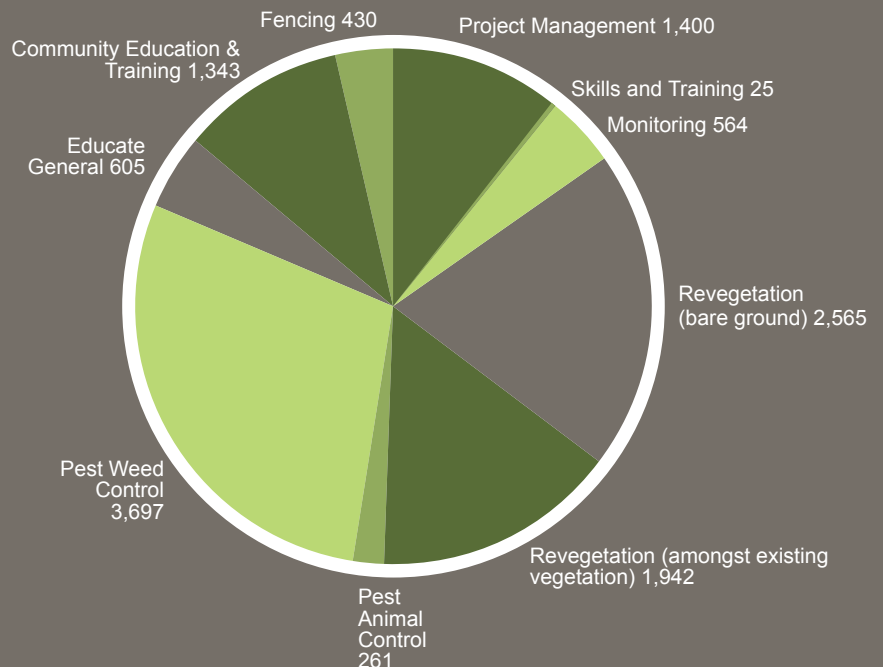
In 2008-09, over 12,800 volunteer hours were spent undertaking Second Generation Landcare Grant funded projects, equating to an in-kind contribution worth \$ 256,600 (time calculated @ \$20 per hour).

LANDCARE VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT INITIATIVE

A *Start Up* grant is available to groups and networks in the region primarily involved in Landcare activities. This is available to new groups, or those that are reactivating after an inactive period of more than 12 months, and assists them in meeting administrative start up expenses. Nine groups accessed this funding in 2008-09 – they were:

- The Upper Campaspe Combined Landcare Group;
- The Karlsruhe Landcare Group, Lake Boga and District Landcare Group;
- The Tarrangower Cactus Control Committee;
- The Cohuna & District Landcare Group;
- The Friends of Crusoe Reservoir and Number 7 Park;
- The Elphinstone Land Management Association;
- The Springs Road Sedgwick Landcare Action Group; and
- The Mandurang Strathfieldsaye Landcare Network.

Volunteer hours contributed by Landcare Groups



NEW NETWORK PROFILE MANDURANG STRATHFIELDSAYE LANDCARE NETWORK

The Mandurang Strathfieldsaye Landcare Network (MSLN) formed to provide a coordinated approach amongst a variety of community based organisations in the district that have an interest in environmental conservation and sustainable landscapes.

The network comprises the Sheepwash Creek Landcare Group, The Otis Foundation, St Francis of the Fields Primary School, and the Strathfieldsaye Primary School. The Strathfieldsaye District Community Enterprise is a major force in the area, and an important supporter of the Network and its members. The network provides support to ad-hoc, non-incorporated satellite Landcare project groups too. Also involved as broader “networks of convenience” are the Strathfieldsaye Scouts, the South Mandurang Pony Club, the Axe Creek Catchment Landcare Group and the Springs Road Sedgwick Landcare Group.

Over the past five years, Mandurang and Strathfieldsaye have undergone extreme levels of population growth, with once productive farm land being developed into residential subdivisions. During this time the natural environment has also experienced changes in levels of protection, with areas of state forest being upgraded to national park and creeks changing from varied private owners to shire-owned linear passive recreation and storm water management reserves.

Increasing participation from organisations such as the Strathfieldsaye Community Enterprise provided the impetus for engaging the broader suburban community in sustainable living and conservation. After all, what happens to the creeks in the urbanised areas flows on to impact the rural areas downstream.

In its first year the MSLN helped to support a GreenCorps team that was working with Strathfieldsaye Primary School by helping to arrange training and experiences that expanded the team’s exposure to a wider range of land management works. During the engagement processes for the development of the Strathfieldsaye sport and recreation landscape plans, all the clubs and organised sporting groups were invited to participate. The network became a de-facto voice for members of the community who are not represented by an official club or peak body (for example, the average person who likes to walk their dog or ride their bike along the streamside reserve after work).

In the future the network aims to raise the profile of the importance and value of the natural environment in the area (including the threatened species and ecosystems), and encourage greater involvement and participation in onground projects.

NEW GROUP PROFILE TARRANGOWER CACTUS CONTROL COMMITTEE



Ian Grenda stem injecting Wheel Cactus.

Photo: Courtesy Tarrangower Cactus Control Committee

Wheel Cactus (*Opuntia robusta*) is a noxious weed that invades farm pastures and bush, affecting farm productivity and biodiversity. The sharp spines harm livestock, wildlife and domestic pets. Seeds, which are spread by birds and foxes, can survive in the environment for 20 years.

The Tarrangower Cactus Control Committee formed to combat Wheel Cactus in the Maldon, Nuggetty and Baringhup districts, where it infests about 10,000 hectares.

Committee President, Ian Grenda, said the group wanted to raise awareness of this serious environmental problem and how to tackle it, swell the number of volunteers helping out with regular field days, and support landholders who want to take action.

“Landowners who want to do something about the problem can come to us for advice, and we will even lend them the equipment to do the job”, said Mr Grenda.



FEATURE PROJECT

BARINGHUP LANDCARE GROUP'S REVIVE THE LODDON PROJECT



Baringhup Landcare Group and school students working together to Revive the Loddon. Photo: Courtesy Baringhup Landcare Group

Just one of the many wonderful projects undertaken during 2008-09, Baringhup Landcare Group's *Revive the Loddon* Major Integrated Project is a superb example of Landcare groups, schools, government agencies, Indigenous groups and the wider community working together to achieve environmental, educational, cultural, social and recreational outcomes.

The project came about because the Baringhup Landcare Group could see the need to:

- Control weeds in the 13 hectares of public reserve that were preventing Loddon River access for the local community and visitors;
- Restore the riparian zone; and
- Empower Baringhup Primary School students by involving them in improving the river environment.

The project involved:

- Engaging students in the Waterwatch program with regular water quality monitoring;
- Treating Blackberry, Gorse, Horehound and Broom with the support of Mt Alexander Shire Council;
- Conducting community field days to plant indigenous trees and understorey plants;
- Implementing erosion control measures, treating difficult Gorse and Spiny Rush infestations, site preparation and further planting, thanks to funding from the North Central CMA;
- Developing a management plan in conjunction with Bendigo Tafe (BRIT) students;
- Developing an educational program for local schools on the values and importance of the Loddon River and water's place in our environment;

- Planning for a 'river expo' to be held in October 2009 featuring workshops: fishing the Loddon, sustainable Loddon, macroinvertebrate identification, history of the Loddon, Indigenous culture and basket weaving;
- Monitoring birds and phascogales by Baringhup Primary School students and Connecting Country members;
- Support from Knox Garden Club in supplying students with environmental resources for their school vegetable garden and river planting activities; and
- Liaising with Baringhup Primary School students, North Central CMA's Indigenous Facilitator Mark Pietzsch and members of the Jarra Jarra Nation to develop signage explaining Aboriginal culture and lifestyle on the Loddon River prior to white settlement.

Highlights of the project:

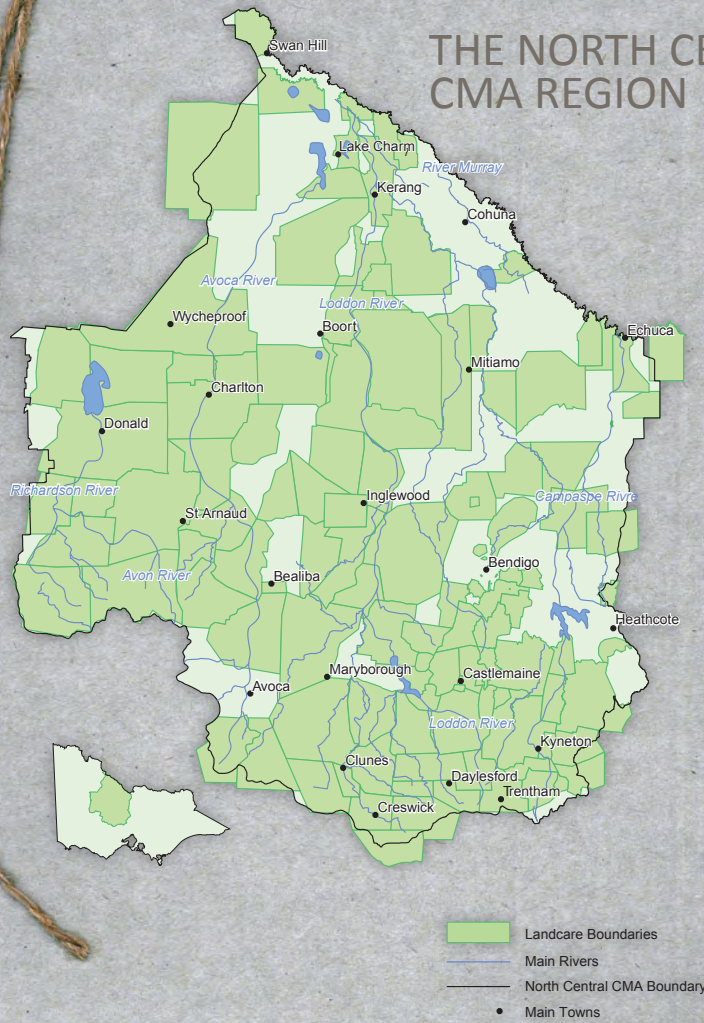
- Successful plantings providing a stark contrast to the original degraded land;
- Local primary school students who have a strong connection to the river now understand the benefits of indigenous plants and appreciate the value of volunteering and cooperation;
- Enhanced appreciation of waterways generally – and the Loddon River specifically, by the local community;
- Access to the public reserve which provides a pleasant place to fish, paint, cycle, learn, relax, picnic and have fun;
- The construction of a barbeque from local stone in memory of one of Baringhup Landcare's founding members, Steven Brown;
- Improved soil stability within the riparian zone; and
- Stronger partnerships with stakeholders and increased community cohesion.

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**THE NORTH CENTRAL
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